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Advisory Announcement

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Aleutian Islands Subdistrict State-Waters Pacific Cod 2023 Guideline Harvest Level and Fishery Opening Announced

The Aleutian Islands Subdistrict (AIS) state-waters Pacific cod fishery 2023 guideline harvest level (GHL) is 11,875,000 pounds. The AIS includes all state waters of the Aleutian Islands District west of 170° W long.

The AIS state-waters Pacific cod season opens January 1 in the Adak Section (within 3 nmi between 175° W long to 178° W long) to vessels 60 feet or less overall length (OAL), except for vessels operating longline gear which may be no more than 58 feet OAL.

State waters of the AIS east and west of the Adak Section (east of 175° W long and west of 178° W long) will open January 1 under parallel fishery regulations with harvest accruing toward the applicable federal total allowable catch (TAC).

Four days after the federal Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands catcher-vessel greater than or equal to 60 feet in OAL pot gear fishery closes, all state waters of the AIS (west of 170° W long) will open to the state-waters AIS Pacific cod season to vessels 60 feet or less OAL using trawl or mechanical jig gear, vessels 100 feet or less OAL using pot gear, and vessels 58 feet or less OAL using longline gear.

All state waters of the AIS will open to vessels 125 feet or less OAL using pot gear and vessels 100 feet or less OAL using trawl gear at 12:00 noon on March 15th. The AIS state-waters Pacific cod season will close when the GHL is reached.

During the October 2022 Alaska Board of Fisheries meeting, new regulations were adopted impacting season dates and vessel sizes for this fishery. New regulations are expected to go into effect during the 2023 season. Operators or agents of vessels greater than 60 feet in length are encouraged to contact ADF&G if their fishing plan includes participating in the 2023 AIS fishery. Once the new regulations become effective, they will be announced via an advisory announcement.

The AIS state-waters Pacific cod fishery is an exclusive vessel registration area. A vessel may not be registered for more than one exclusive registration area during a calendar year. However, a vessel may register for one state-waters Pacific cod exclusive registration area and any nonexclusive state-waters Pacific cod registration area within the same year. Vessels must be registered for the state-waters fishery prior to participating. Before registering, fishermen must obtain a 2023 interim-use permit card for miscellaneous finfish from the Commercial Fisheries Entry Commission. Fishermen entering or exiting the state-waters Pacific cod fishery must notify the Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G) in Dutch Harbor and deliver all unprocessed Pacific cod on board.

The daily harvest limit of Pacific cod in the AIS state-waters Pacific cod season is 150,000 pounds round fish weight per vessel, with a maximum of 150,000 round pounds of unprocessed Pacific cod on board a vessel at any time. All Pacific cod caught must be retained, and any overage must be reported to ADF&G, with proceeds from the overage forfeited to the state.

The Aleutian Islands coral habitat protection area and the Aleutian Islands habitat conservation area (5 AAC 39.167(a)(1) and (2); 50 C.F.R. 679.22) are in effect during both the parallel and state-waters seasons.

The state-waters Pacific cod season Steller sea lion protection measures are located in Tables 5 and 12 of 50 CFR Part 679 available on the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) website: <https://www.ecfr.gov/cgi-bin/text-idx?SID=e928699f8903a416bed34b9bcaae6903&mc=true&node=pt50.13.679&rgn=div5> except the Steller sea lion site at Kanaga/Ship Rock is closed to taking Pacific cod only within 3 nautical miles.

Parallel Pacific cod fisheries Steller sea lion protection measures, except as noted below, will mirror federal Steller sea lion closures. During the parallel Pacific cod fishery in the Adak Section of the Aleutian Islands Subdistrict (175° W long to 178° W long) the State of Alaska has adopted federal regulations implementing Steller sea lion protection measures located in Table 5 of 50 CFR Part 679 (69 FR 75865, December 20, 2004) posted on the NMFS website <https://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/FR-2004-12-20/pdf/04-27698.pdf> except the Steller sea lion site at Kanaga/Ship Rock at 51° 46.70' N lat, 177° 20.72' W long, is closed to the taking of Pacific cod only within 3 nautical miles. Vessels using trawl, pot, mechanical jigging machine, or hand troll gear in the parallel Pacific cod fishery in the Adak Section are restricted to 60 feet or less OAL; vessels using longline gear may not exceed 58 feet OAL.

For more information, contact ADF&G in Dutch Harbor at (907) 581-1239.

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